

THE RELAY

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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Hearts Ignited, Memories Forged, Lives Changed

By Josh Kinney
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WILDWOOD – The scene was captivating, the feeling – fired up, as hundreds of students rose to their feet leaving slews of empty seats, processioning toward the IGNITE stage. Youth leaders, volunteers, and young adults with linked arms stretched the length of the stage's base, ready to embrace those coming forth to make a decision for Jesus.

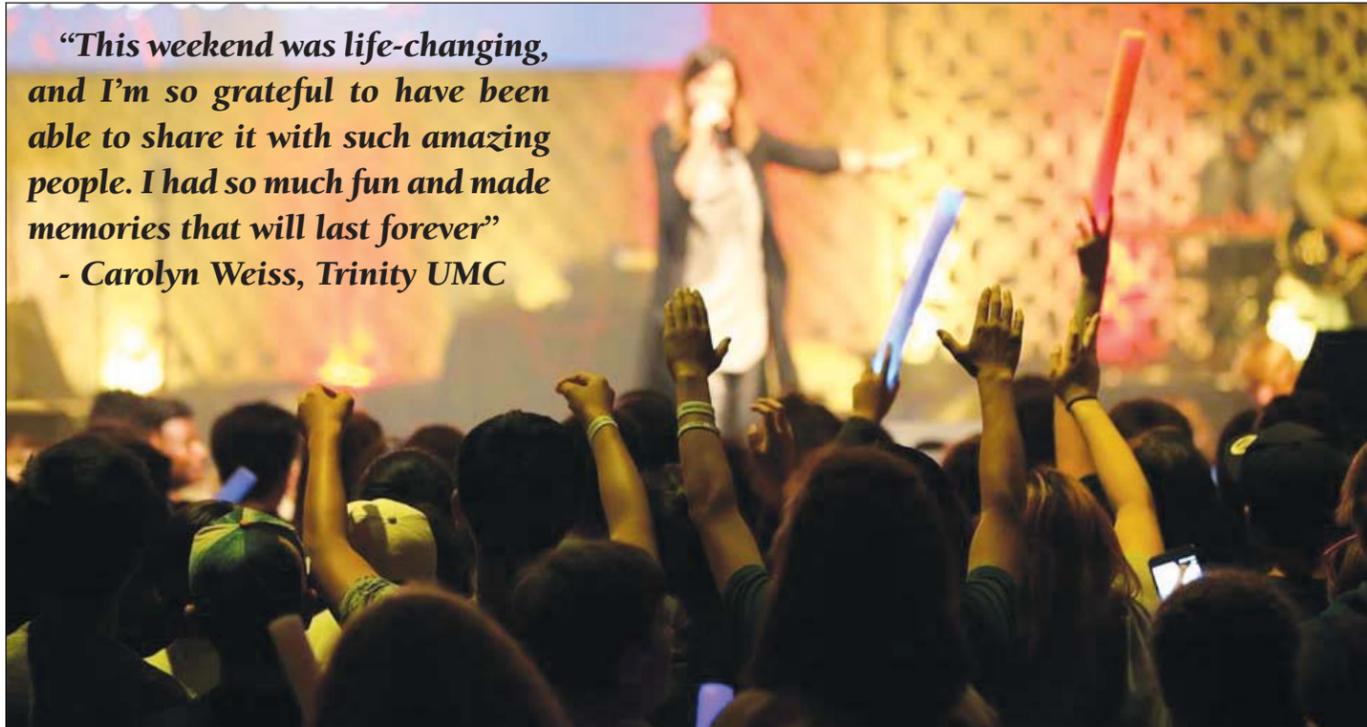
Reggie Dabbs, the IGNITE conference speaker, watched from center stage as students came forward. With a furrowed brow, beads of sweat trickling down his face and watery eyes, he knew his work was done, and the Holy Spirit would take it from there.

"We all have chaos," Dabbs cried from the mic. "It brings us to our knees. In the midst of the chaos, God is there." He continued, "No matter where you're from, no matter what you've done, the fire of God is for you."

The fourth annual highly-anticipated IGNITE youth conference unleashed a rush of energy and exhilaration, bursting through the doors of the Wildwoods Convention Center on Sept. 29 - Oct. 1. Students were greeted by a group of supercharged district superintendents high-fiving groups as they entered. Of the over 1,300 youth in attendance, several hundred clamored against the stage on Saturday night, hugging their leaders and

"This weekend was life-changing, and I'm so grateful to have been able to share it with such amazing people. I had so much fun and made memories that will last forever"

- Carolyn Weiss, Trinity UMC



Over 1,300 students gathered for the 2017 IGNITE youth conference in Wildwood, Sept. 29 - Oct. 1. Photo by Josh Kinney

bowing their heads in prayer as hearts were stirred for God.

"This weekend was life-changing, and I'm so grateful to have been able to share it with such amazing people," said Carolyn Weiss, a student from Trinity UMC. "I had so much fun and made memories that will last forever."

As one of the most sought-after public school and event speakers in the U.S., Dabbs brought his passion and raw, honest testimony to the IGNITE stage. His boldness and character touched the hearts of the students as they chanted in unison, "Reggie, Reggie, Reggie!" before his speaking sessions.

Nationally-acclaimed Christian singer and songwriter Meredith Andrews led worship services as longtime IGNITE emcee and founder of The Youth Alliance, Preston Centuolo motivated the crowd and delivered inspiring messages alongside alumni from the Compassion

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Laity Bring Energy, Hopefulness to Leadership Academy

By Josh Kinney
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NEPTUNE – "You could actually feel the excitement in the air," exclaimed GNJ Lay leader Rosa Williams. "All of the laity were eager, excited, and engaged in learning with delightful energy and a spirit of hope." The Mission and Resource Center was packed and bustling with laity from across GNJ participating in the day long 2017 Laity Leadership Academy on September 9.

Designed to provide the tools and skills required for lay leaders to empower their churches for the challenges of the 21st century, the academy featured six different tracks with action plans for laity to bring back to their congregations.

"It's an inspiration to witness the faithfulness of the laity that attended this training event," said Diana who? , "Some of them got up very early and traveled far to be with us for the day. It's truly a joy to support of the Board of Laity in all that they do to equip the laity of GNJ."

Trey Wince, Director of New Disciples led an evangelism track on "connecting with your community in not-so-scary ways."

"People are just so excited to be invested," said Wince. "And that's what makes it a fun group."

The evangelism track focused on ways their churches could seek out local issues and meet with community leaders to link the church with the community. They discussed marketing their church and actively making connections with people outside their church.

Eric Drew, Director of Worship, led a track called "I'm with the band" focused particularly on leading worship. With members of worship bands from throughout GNJ coming to engage in learning and dialogue, the group also had a chance to jam together.

"We learned a lot from each other about challenges in our churches as well as things that are working well," said Drew, who was especially excited to have Rev. Charles Perez of Morristown UMC come with a student from his church's Holy Hoops Ministry. In the group's time of worship band coaching they incorporated freestyle Christian rap.

"That was pretty fun," said Drew.

Arthur Harrell and Helen Hunter, who both have a healthcare background, led a track about vital ministries with older adults due to the amount of congregants in GNJ who are aging and have family members responsible for taking care of them.

"There's a lot of stress associated with the aging process and we wanted to try to address some of the stresses and effectively alleviate them for care givers," said Harrell. "We sought to provide participants with local resources for both care givers and the people they're

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GNJ Lay Leader Rosa Williams greets those gathered for the 2017 Laity Leadership Academy on Sept. 9 at the Mission and Resource Center. Photo by Biho Chung



GNJ celebrated installations for two District Superintendents in September. Rev. Glenn Conaway was installed as Delaware Bay Superintendent with a service at Trinity UMC in Mullica Hill on September 10 and Rev. Frank Davis was installed as Capital Superintendent at St. Mark's UMC in Hamilton Square on September 24. Photos by Paul Guba and Brittney Reilly

A Message from the Bishop



Complicated Blessings

By my senior year of high school, I had played football for 11 years and had started at quarterback for nine of those years. During one of my games, I dropped back to pass the ball and saw an opening around the right end. We needed nine yards for a critical first down and I took off down the field. As I approached the first down marker, an opposing player lunged to tackle me with his helmet catching my knee. We made the first down. When I got up and started jogging back to the huddle, my knee gave out and I went down to the ground. I was

raised in a family that when you got hurt you were taught to walk it off. I got up, took a step, and down I went again. My senior year season was over and I wound up in a leg cast for six weeks.

Today I want to talk with you about complicated blessings, particularly at this time in the church's life. Blessings are gifts in the unexpected. The Beatitudes in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke speak of such blessings. Blessed are the poor for theirs is the Kingdom of God, blessed are those who hunger for you will be filled, blessed are those who weep for you will laugh (Luke 6:20-21). The Beatitudes are sometimes called reversals, because in God's realm, what seems most devastating can be reversed into unexpected blessing.

Liminal Season

Many are calling this time period for the church a "liminal season." A liminal time is an in-between time. One chapter of the church's history has come to a close and a new season has not yet begun. For instance, the protestant reformation can be seen as a liminal season. 500 years ago, there was an emerging dissatisfaction within the church. Some stopped going to church, others worked to reform the church and others started new denominations. What was clear was the church would not return to business as usual, but what wasn't clear was what the church would become.

Susan Beaumont, a national leader in helping the church figure out what's next, is working with GNJ leadership on our next strategic ministry plan. She says that during a liminal period, the church needs to shift from knowing to learning, from doing to becoming.

I also believe that we cannot compare ourselves to the past to shape our future. As we look back, we see the church in the United States at a time when it was larger than any time in its history. Eighty years ago, the Methodist Church in America was the fastest growing church in the world. From the 1940s to 1970s we had to do very little, except open the doors and people would come.

What Are We Learning

Today, the culture has a much different attitude and understanding of the church. Here are some things we are already learning. People are interested in a variety of experiences. When I was in high school there were only a couple brands of sneakers, and most of us in Philadelphia wore Converse that came in either black or white, high top or low top. Today there are numerous brands, styles and colors. People expect a variety of choices when they come to church. The culture is also telling us they want more transparency, less institutionalism and more understanding of how God and the Bible connect with their everyday life.

In GNJ we are learning from more than 500 people who shared with us in recent surveys and small group conversations that they like our focus on leadership development, prioritizing the mission and ministry of the congregations, and the new resources GNJ developed. A number of people also told us that they are afraid for their congregation's future, the money is running out and fewer people are worshipping. They told us they like what GNJ is becoming but are afraid for their future.

In high school when my football season ended because of injury, it actually was just getting started, but in a different way. It was a complicated blessing. I continued to go to practices after my injury and the coach encouraged me to give players tips about how they could improve. On game days I limped up and down the side lines and the coach had me call the plays. That senior year of high school, I learned a lot about myself, about leadership, and about how to make a difference from the sidelines. It's a complicated blessing because I wasn't looking to get injured, but because of it, God developed me for what was next in my life.

Sometimes the church looks like its limping on the sidelines in a losing game, but maybe God is up to something. Maybe God wants us learning how to better connect with the culture, to let go of things that, well, quite frankly may not matter that much to new generations of believers and even to God, and to focus on the things that are about real faith, relevant mission and life changing messages.

New Blessings

The thing about complicated blessings is that they always start out by looking bad, and then in God's own way, God reverses things on us and we wind up with a blessing. Here are some of the blessings I am beginning to witness in GNJ:

- We are taking greater risks and not seeing failure as a bad thing but a learning experience
- Laity are stepping up to learn and lead
- We are starting more new faith communities than we did over the last 30 years
- We are diversifying worship experiences and changing things so they are not always the same from Sunday to Sunday
- We worry less when people leave because they do not like the changes



GNJ is looking for the right person to join the Connectional Ministries team to serve as project manager, coordinate events and manage support staff. The Connectional Ministries team provides programs and resources in the five markers of vitality.

FOR MORE INFO:

Go to www.gnjumc.org for job description and information on applying for this key position with in the conference.

- We are doing more observation from the sidelines before we rush in to play the game
- We are talking more to people in the community about what they would like to see in church
- More GNJ churches are becoming multicultural

Churches stepping into these blessings are seeing a different future, not better but different. The operative word here is future; they see a future. I propose we add some new beatitudes to the Bible:

Blessed are those on the sidelines, they will experience more of the game with the people at the margins.

Blessed are those who take risks and fail, they have a future through trial and error rather than playing it safe.

Blessed are those who worry less about those who are leaving and focus more on who God wants to send our way, they will enjoy new company.

Blessed are the churches that are becoming more diverse, they are becoming the Kingdom of God.

Keep the faith!
John

Bishop John Schol - United Methodists of Greater New Jersey



Join this Spirit-driven movement as GNJ congregations rediscover the power of the redemptive grace of God in Jesus Christ through baptism. Resources include small groups discussion guide, sermon series, baptism renewal, liturgy, videos, graphics and much more.



Register today for available resources starting in November.
www.waterandroots.org

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FOR ADVERTISING RATES, INFORMATION and PLACEMENT

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Generosity is a gift of the spirit.

Creating a culture of generosity is one of the most important tasks of the church as we seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.



HOW TO CREATE A CULTURE OF GENEROSITY

Adapted from a Horizon Blog by Joel Mickell



REMEMBER GOD'S GENEROSITY

We are made to be generous because we're made in the image of a generous God. We are most like God when we're generous.

LISTEN TO JESUS' WISDOM

Jesus had more to say about giving, generosity, and stewardship than He did about any other single topic. If it was that important to Jesus, shouldn't it be to us?

BE JOYFUL

The happiest people are generous people. 1 Thessalonians 5:16 encourages us to "be joyful always!" Generosity provides an undeniable path to great joy.

DON'T HOLD POSSESSIONS TOO CLOSE

When Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there also is your heart," He made a connection we shouldn't overlook – heart and possessions! When we're generous with our possessions, it changes us beginning with our hearts and in turn, our lives.

INSPIRE OTHERS

Generosity inspires generosity. The generosity we live out in our lives leads to generosity living out in the lives of others. See *1 Chronicles 29:1-9*.

INVEST IN RELATIONSHIPS

People and relationships are what matter most to God. It's why Jesus came to earth and died on the cross. When we're generous with our resources, we invest in people, ultimately changing lives and transforming the world.

INVEST YOUR BLESSINGS

Stewardship is God's business plan for funding the work of making disciples. God gives us everything we need to accomplish what God wants in the local church. We're invited to return and invest our blessings and resources.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control,"

- Galatians 5:22-23 (NSRV)

For more information or resourcing in the area of Generosity and Stewardship, contact:

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In the Midst of Hurricane Irma, the Power of Prayer and Connection

By Josh Kinney
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Tom Lank, the Northeastern Jurisdiction Volunteers in Mission Coordinator, was in the middle of preparing to lead a training session for long-term volunteers in upstate New York, when his cell phone buzzed with an incoming call. A heart wrenching voicemail was left by Kathy Foley, a member of Marlton UMC, describing how her father was asked to evacuate from a nursing home in Naples, FL for Hurricane Irma without family nearby to transport him. With her father having only a few hours of oxygen left, Foley was near tears as she finished her story.

"I called back and told her I would try to find help," said Lank, who called a local disaster response coordinator in Southwest Florida, who directed him to the Florida Conference's Disaster Call Center. The young woman on the other line could hear the urgency of the need and took down Foley's contact number, telling Lank to pass along the proper numbers for FEMA and the Red Cross. He texted Foley the information and walked into the training session late.

"I told the class that I needed to pray and I needed them to pray with me," said Lank. He explained the situation and the group gathered around to pray.

"We prayed that God would preserve Kathy's dad," said Lank. "We prayed that the connectional system would work. We prayed for all those who were still in harm's way while we sat comfortably in a cool, dry, electrified room. And we prayed that God would use us as necessary to meet the needs of people like Kathy and her dad."

As the session concluded, a class member approached Lank whose mother was a clergy in the North Georgia Conference and had clergy friends in Naples.

"She had already been in touch with her mom and her mom had contacted her Naples friends," exclaimed Lank. "They got the address for Kathy's dad and got Kathy's number. The pastor in Naples got in touch with a clergy colleague even closer to the nursing home and they were able to get Kathy's dad oxygen and into an air-conditioned room."

All of this happened in the span of nine hours, which was exactly how much oxygen Foley's dad had left when Lank first received the call.

"Because of the boundless goodness of God, the faith of a GNJ parishioner, and the amazing connection of the United Methodist Church, a plea for help went from Marlton, NJ to Windsor, NY, to Rome, GA, to Naples, FL, and a miracle happened," said Lank.



Terri Porter from the Skylands Outreach Depot reports that GNJ United Methodists have been so generous in relief efforts. Pictured above is John Callanan from United Methodist Communities who dropped off 500 hygiene kits and Gabby Diee who joined members of Sussex UMC in restocking the shelves. Photos provided

Relief and Recovery Updates

To date, GNJ has collected over \$242,000 for UMCOR disaster relief for Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. On Oct. 3, Sam Perez, a member of Bishop Janes UMC delivered a check from GNJ for \$50,000 directly to Bishop Hector Ortiz in Puerto Rico for relief efforts. Thank you! Learn more and find out ways you can help by visiting www.gnjumc.org/disasterresponse



Children at Florence UMC join the flood bucket making efforts. Photo provided by Brittney Reilly



Tabernacle UMC in Erma held a "Hygiene Kit Packing Party" to support hurricane victims. More than 100 people participated from the church and community, assembling over 400 kits. Pictured above, the local Girl Scout troop assist with the mission. Photo provided by Rev. Glenn A. Scheyhing

Church Sponsors Pet Rescue Mission After Hurricane

By Denise Herschel
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ALLENDALE - With the recent devastation in southeastern Texas due to Hurricane Harvey, many have stepped up to help those in need who have suffered from the effects of the destructive storm. It is not only people who have been displaced from their homes but pets as well and when Archer UMC member John Underfer was updated about the hurricane's impact on the region, he knew he had to be of assistance. As the owner and operator of pet transportation company, SafePet Transport, Underfer decided to utilize his business and embark on a "mission of mercy to Houston to help the four-legged members of God's creation" in early September.

"John created the idea and spearheaded the mission. He is in the business of pet transport and wanted to give back in the wake of Hurricane Harvey," said Rev. Tom Korkuch, Archer UMC senior pastor.

"I own the best transportation company in the world so it was in my sphere of influence and something I could offer to help out with," Underfer said. "SafePet Transport knows that your pet is a be-



Archer UMC youth gather pet supplies for animals affected by Hurricane Harvey. Photo provided

loved and integral member of your family. I made contact with the Houston Humane Society and delivered 6,000 pounds of food and supplies."

Korkuch added that his involvement in

helping with the mission had been "to get the word out" particularly to the broader community outside of the four walls of the church.

"I used mostly social media to do this. I also coordinated the pickup of the donated items prior to his trip to Texas. When John first came to me with this idea, I thought that it would partner well with our church's monetary donations to UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) that we had already started. It also gave me the opportunity to talk about God's care for all of creation including our four-legged friends," said Korkuch. "The church and the broader community responded by filling our narthex with pet supplies, especially food. I heard from people who had no connection with the church whatsoever, as well as fellow United Methodists from neighboring congregations. It was a good example of how the connection can work in times of need!"

According to Underfer, over 6,000 pounds of food and supplies were donated with Girl Scout Troop 96353 of Franklin Lakes helping by spending their Labor Day weekend outside a local supermarket collecting supplies.

Underfer added that he believes there

were thousands of animals who were rescued from the hurricane.

"The International Humane Society had just sent an airplane to retrieve those available for displacement so we did not bring any pets back with us. The dogs and the cats at the Houston Humane Society (HHS) at that time were strays, so we could not displace them until they had been there for 30 days in case the families came to claim them. The HHS are wonderful people who took in over 200 dogs and cats that had been abandoned or from shelters in Galveston and Corpus Christi," he said.

Although the rescue mission was a "one-time" trip, Korkuch added that there will be a long-time ongoing need in Texas for both humans and animals.

"We have been encouraging our folks to continue to give generously to UMCOR. We also know that many rescued pets have been brought to our area so local shelters are going to need both donations of time and money in the immediate future," he said.

For more information about the continual need for donations and assistance go to www.safepettransport.com or call 844-WOW-SAFE.

Well Project Saves Lives, Transforms Communities

By Denise Herschel
Nj6pack@yahoo.com

FARMINGDALE - Mention the name Alice Hassard to members of the Farmingdale First UMC community and what comes to mind is a unsung local hero who gave tirelessly of herself to those in need. Whether sewing quilts for the elderly and newborn babies or raising funds for those coping with disasters by providing warm blankets, Hassard, a past Farmingdale United Methodist Women President for many years, was well-known for supporting missions. So when Hassard passed away in August 2009, this treasured member of her church community had a project started in her honor dubbed 'Alice's Well.'

"Alice had a dream to build a well for a village in a third world country. She knew what a nearby source of fresh clean water would mean to the people of that country - especially to the women and the children," Marie Andreen, Chairperson Mission Outreach and Member of United Methodist Women, said. "Alice was a woman who gave what she could, when she could, to whatever project was before her. Just weeks before her death she was sitting with me in the front yard of my mother's home helping with a yard sale for the Mission Outreach Team. While sitting and talking with my aunt, she questioned me about what project could be undertaken by the Mission Team. A water project was on the top of the list. After her death, I was approached by members of the United Methodist Women about what could be done to honor her. A water project was the first thing that came to mind and so it began."

According to Andreen, the Farmingdale United Methodist Women and Has-

sard's family wanted to give the gift of pure, safe water to a village that lacks what "we all take for granted" as a memorial for her.

"The mission chosen by Alice's family is to dig a well for people in an African village where there is no access to water, much less clean drinking water. Alice's presence in our community was very much like clean water to drink, to bathe in or to wash clothes. She relieved systematic suffering wherever she went, even in the midst of being poor herself," Dawn Richards, a former member of the Farmingdale United Methodist Women, said.

Alice's Well Project began in Hassard's honor with the first well completed in December 2013 in Budondo-BF Mahere, Democratic Republic of the Congo, making Hassard's dream a reality.

"Contact was made with organizations that build wells throughout the world. Charity: water was the agency selected because the organization works closely with the villagers throughout the entire process and reports back to those who have given the money for it," said Donna Jordan, former Farmingdale United Methodist Women President and current church member. "Charity: water selects the village that they recognize as having the greatest need."

According to agency, the water project funded in the Democratic Republic of the Congo allowed 250 people of Budondo-BF Mahere to have access to clean and safe drinking water. The project took 22 months to complete and for many, was a gift and an answer to years of prayer.

"It was a sudden realized and unexplained hope in a forgotten place where dreams of a better future had died long ago," Scott Harrison, founder of charity:



Community members of Felsi Berebre in Ethiopia are pictured gathered around their Alice's Well. Photo provided

water, said.

According to Jordan, the second well was built in Felsi Berebre, Ethiopia and completed in September 2016.

"We recently sent in money to pay for a third well in June 2017 which I was told would take about the same time to be completed as the other two wells - 18 to 22 months. You always have to consider the time line can vary due to circumstances beyond anyone's control. This third well is a rehabilitated well to be built in Malawi. Now we are again in the process of raising funds for a fourth well. We are very fortunate to have so many sources of donations to Alice's Well Project," Jordan said.

"There were many who donated just a dollar or two, some who gave every month until we had enough. A young

woman made many yarn covered coat hangers that were given with a five dollar donation. A lifelong childhood friend Carol, who knew she was dying, requested that donations to Alice's Well Project be made in her name. Many donations from many other groups of United Methodist Women who knew my aunt sent donations. My Aunt Alice would be amazed by this gift that is given to honor her. What better tribute than to give the gift of living water; clean, clear water. My aunt was a woman who knew what the widow's mite was and gave it and more through her charitable endeavors as a United Methodist Woman, a Christian woman and a woman of this world," Andreen said.

For more information about Alice's Well Project email farmingdalefumc@optimum.net

Rivers of Life Transforming Lives Among Arabic-Speaking Community Pt. 2

By Douglas Ruffle
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BAYONNE - Rivers of Life was started in 2003 as part of the ministry of the Wesley UMC in Bayonne. Emad Gerges left a successful career as a mechanical engineer in Cairo, Egypt, to respond to a call to ministry that led him to Bayonne. He had started preaching in Egypt even while continuing in secular jobs. Though he had grown up in the Coptic Orthodox Church native to Egypt, as a young adult, he said that he was not at peace and began searching for alternatives. He found a church in Cairo that traced its heritage to British Methodism and he began attending. Soon he became a sought-after preacher. As a lay preacher, he began preaching not only in Egypt, but in Iraq, Libya, Lebanon, Syria, England, and the Sudan. Once he preached before 3,000 people at a revival in Khartoum. Amid the preaching and successful business career, he received a clear call from God to leave his secular work and dedicate his life to full-time ministry. He received invitations from Arabic-speaking Christians in the United States to come.

One of those invitations came from a group of four Arabic-speaking Christians in Bayonne. This group had been renting space at the Wesley UMC. After he visited them they invited him to stay.

"How can I do this?" he prayed to God. "How can I go from preaching to thousands of people to pastoring a group of four?"

After two weeks of prayer, he sensed from God a clear message: "Don't look at how many people you are preaching to. I need you here."

Emad spoke no English at the time, however, his wife, Marianne, spoke English fluently. With her help and translation, he met with the pastor of Wesley UMC, Rev. Gary Frieze, and found this church similar in many ways to the Wesleyan church he had joined in Cairo. He and Marianne joined Wesley UMC as members. He met with the District Superintendent, the Reverend Dr. Lloyd Terrell, and

soon was giving leadership to the Wesley Arabic-speaking group.

"I would look through the phone book and identify the Christian last names from an Arabic-speaking background and I would send them Christian messages," he said. "Eventually, I invited people to attend a gathering at Wesley UMC."

His District Superintendent arranged that he attend licensing school. Afterwards, he enrolled in the Course of Study at Wesley Theological Seminary so that he could be certified as a local pastor.

"The Course of Study program and ESL classes helped me learn English. I was still not fluent, however, when the District Superintendent asked me to serve both the English and Arabic speaking congregations."

The Superintendent insisted he serve both congregations, even though the English congregants resisted the idea of him becoming their pastor. "Start with translation," suggested Dr. Terrell, "and once you become more comfortable with the language, begin to preach in English."

14 years after it started, "Rivers of Life" has grown to an average worship attendance of 200. The English-speaking congregation still gathers for worship every Sunday at 10 a.m. They are a much smaller group, sometimes worshipping about 15 people, but nevertheless faithful members of the church. Pastor Gerges' family joins him in this ministry. His wife, Marianne, directs the Sunday School program and Youth Mission. Their son, David, now fifteen years old, serves on the praise and worship team playing the keyboards and drums. Their daughter, Joy, 13 years old, helps with the Sunday School and editing videos.

90% of the "Rivers of Life" congregation are Egyptian by birth or heritage. The remaining 10% come from Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq. Gerges keeps in touch with his well dispersed parish through YouTube video messages that he posts every morning at 6am. He calls these "Faith Messages" and attaches the YouTube links to emails. He also records audio messages for his flock. He also

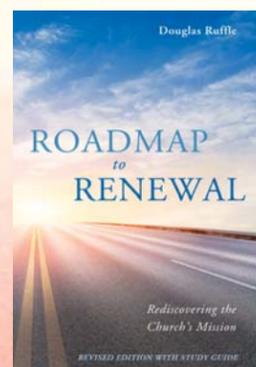
shares the message via Facebook. In addition, the regular Sunday worship service is streamed live from Bayonne to more than 500 viewers from around the world.

Most who attend worship come from

Christian origins, including Pentecostal, mainline Protestant, and Coptic Orthodox. It is a great leap from someone of Coptic origins, a Christian Church that has been in Egypt since the earliest

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AVAILABLE NOW ON AMAZON



Doug Ruffle's

ROADMAP to RENEWAL

is available in a newly revised edition that includes a study guide. Take a journey together with others from your local church - a road trip that will help you rediscover your true mission.

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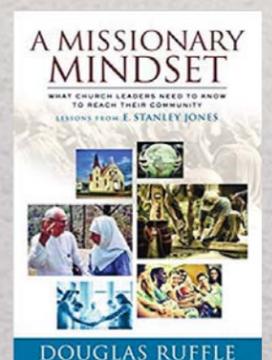
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Doug Ruffle's

A MISSIONARY MINDSET

Using the timeless principles of E. Stanley Jones, A Missionary Mindset transfers them for use today. Teaching us to approach the mission field as if we were from a different country and learning a new culture, a new way of communicating, and a new way to connect people to the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.





Youth from Pinelands UMC enjoy the IGNITE beach bonfire.



Over 1,300 students took part in communion together on World Communion Sunday at IGNITE.



Students clap, laugh and cheer for their friends at the first ever 'IGNITE's Got Talent' show.



Compassion alumni share powerful testimony of how sponsorship can change lives, families, and futures.



Eric Drew, Director of Worship and IGNITE thanked the young adult IGNITE Squad for all of their work.

"I will never forget this IGNITE"
 – Kayla Eberly
 Vincetown UMC



Bishop John Schol high fives a student from the IGNITE stage after a closing prayer.



It was hard to tell who was more Fired Up for IGNITE, the youth of the GNJ District Superintendents.

Photos by Josh Kinney



All smiles glowing in the IGNITE beach bonfire.



From musical performances, singing, rap, comedy, poetry and dance, IGNITE's Got Talent was a hit.



Leonor Ortega Till "Jeff the Girl" of Five Iron Frenzy shared her story of following her passion and her faith.



DJ Vow kicked off Friday and Saturday nights, spinning tunes mixed with worship music.

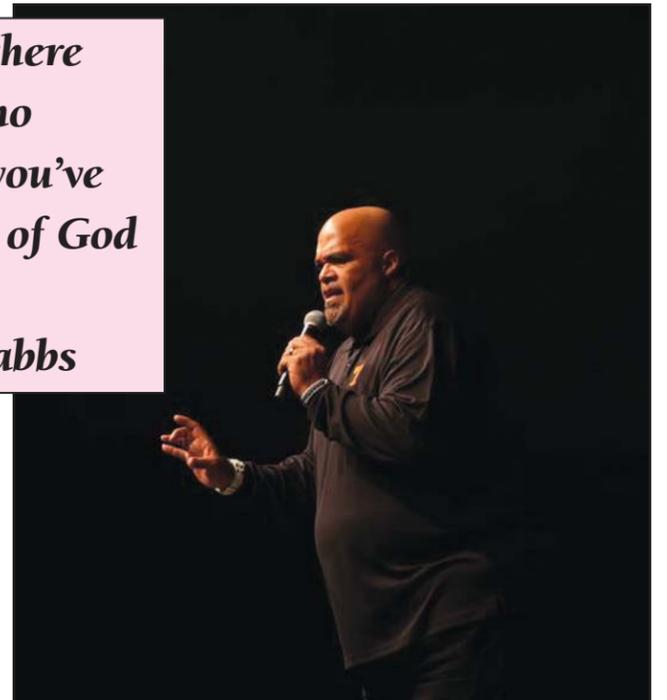


Hundreds of students came forward to make a decision for Jesus after Reggie Dabbs' sermon



Nationally renowned Christian singer and songwriter, Meredith Andrews, led worship and spoke to the hearts of youth.

"No matter where you're from, no matter what you've done, the fire of God is for you"
 – Reggie Dabbs



Reggie Dabbs challenged, inspired, and shared his story from the depths of his heart.



Preston Centuolo described the annual IGNITE conference as a "family reunion."



Christian rap artist Tedashii closed out Saturday night as hundreds danced and sang surrounding the stage.

Photos by Josh Kinney

Church Helps Initiate ID Program for Community

By Kamelia Ani
Kamelianiphoto@gmail.com

MORRISTOWN – Rev. Brandon Cho of Morristown UMC started getting calls from congregants who were worried about new federal immigration policies and he knew something needed to be done. In a joint effort with Wind of Spirit – an immigration advocacy organization, the Morristown Clergy Council, and backing by city officials, the Morristown Municipal ID program was conceived.

The need for a municipal id was clear. Proof of residency is required for opening a bank account, certain health care services and accessible hospital medical information.

Parents need to proof of residency to sign up their children for sports activities or to swim at the municipal pool need ID.

“Our ultimate goal is to always be a fair and welcoming community,” said Cho. “Many of our congregants are recently arrived immigrants. We strongly feel that they are an asset to the community and this country. We want them to have access to the same opportunities as the rest of us. All they want is a shot at the American dream, and we want to help give that to them. This ID program is the first of many steps in that direction.”

Morristown is a culturally diverse city with 34% of the 19,000 population having Latino or Hispanic origin. Morristown UMC launched a bilingual ministry, Nueva Esperanza (New Hope) to make worship more accessible to everyone in the community.

Many members of immigrant communities do not drive or have a driver's license. Obtaining proper identification

becomes a serious issue for them.

Community and church members asserted at the council meeting on August 1 that being able to produce identification and proof of residence would greatly improve interactions immigrants might have with law enforcement officials and ICE to prevent swift action regarding deportation. The council unanimously approved the program.

Mayor Timothy Dougherty was so enthused by the initiative that he was the first in line to sign up for a card. Now all people, including immigrants can make an appointment, go to Morristown city hall, and within minutes have an ID card stamped with a hologram which will make their lives much easier. The process is safe and private, and no information is shared regarding the legal status of those who apply. The cost for the ID cards is minimal, ranging from \$7 to \$15 depending on the age of the applicant. The ID cards are also useful for underage students who don't have driver's licenses, as well as senior citizens.

Cho says this program is a part of a larger initiative his ministry is taking in aiding the immigrant population. He believes in a “holistic approach” to these issues. So far, the ministry has hosted several workshops in conjunction with Wind of Spirit to help address immigration issues and educate the community on their rights and options. The church's next plan is to create a Hope Center, led by Associate Pastor Charles Perez, to help aid the immigrants living in Morristown.

For more information about Morristown UMC and its programs, visit morristownumc.org.

Apostles in our Midst: Bria Pierre and Camp YDP

A 2017 Series on Apostolic Leadership in GNJ

By Laura Wise
laurakwise@gmail.com

Mission: On the corner of 1st and Arch in Paterson, NJ, the mission is children. CAMP YDP (A Community Association with a Ministry to People – Youth Development Program) is a full-day preschool, afterschool enrichment program, and full-day summer camp. Over 60 years ago, United Methodist Rev. Maxwell Tow founded the camp to serve as a safe haven for single mothers and low-income families. Presently, in partnership with Greater New Jersey, CAMP YDP has transformed into a children-centered mission, focusing on creating a space where students feel empowered, nurtured, and enriched.

In the heart of a city plagued by crime and poverty, students are still excited to come to CAMP, and Executive Director Bria Pierre counts that as a blessing.

“They are dealing with a lot of things in the outside world,” she said. “We want CAMP to be a place where they feel respected, so that's what we strive to do. We can't do it alone. It's important that we all work together.”

Not only does CAMP provide an enriching learning experience for students, it also serves as a resource for students' families. They've partnered with CUMAC, another United Methodist affiliated nonprofit based in Paterson working to alleviate hunger, and are able to offer food to their families every Wednesday.

CAMP depends on the tuition dollars from the families of students, yet 80% of these families experience low-income. For this group of students, tuition is subsidized by the state but the program is dependent on funding. Pierre and her staff work to create new programming that attracts students of different backgrounds to the school to help balance out their overhead costs.

Pierre's goal is to continue growing CAMP. Not only are funding relationships important, but so are cultivating relationships with other nonprofits and members of the Paterson community.

“We always need finances, but more so, we need people to get involved,” said Pierre. “We need people to become a part of the change and movement that is creating a better Paterson. If you have an idea for an enrichment class, come teach it. Come work in our community



garden. Money is great, we need it, but it's also important for our children to know that people care, so your presence is important.”

Apostle: Bria Pierre has a long history in education, teaching preschool for over ten years. After taking a break from her career to have and raise her children, Pierre was itching to get back to work and give back to the community. Evaluating what might be the best fit for her at the time, she decided to explore job opportunities in Georgia to be closer to her mother. At the same time, she learned about the opportunity to serve at CAMP YDP from her church, St. Mark's UMC in Montclair.

During her interview, Pierre learned that CAMP was struggling with only 30 students enrolled. This kept her up for two days thinking about ways to increase enrollment and how to teach the 30 children to strive and push forward.

“That became my mission,” said Pierre.

Pierre and her staff worked to update programs and secure new opportunities for students. In less than a year, the school grew from an enrollment of 30 to reach capacity at 115 students. It doesn't stop there. CAMP will be adding another classroom this year to help grow the program further.

Pierre has seen God at work at CAMP in more ways than she can count. It's the small things that have touched her and help to validate her work.

“We took the kids ice skating about three miles from Paterson,” she shared. “Three miles makes a difference. Some of them have never been outside of this five block radius where all they see is violence and drugs. To see hope grow where there was no hope, that makes it all worth it. We just know that God has a purpose for us and for the work that we're doing. It's all for God's glory!”

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Racial and Cultural Understanding in Appointments

By Laura Wise
laurakwise@gmail.com

NEPTUNE - GNJ in partnership with the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR), is taking on intercultural competency in the church through love and learning. On Saturday, September 23, GNJ hosted the first Cross-Racial Cross-Cultural Appointment Training with the goal of strengthening and growing diversity, communication, and collaboration in our local churches and communities.

Rev. Juel Nelson, Director of Leadership Development, spoke about the importance of the training. She pointed to the statistics of the cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments in GNJ saying, "This year we had nearly half our new appointments being cross-racial or cross-cultural, meaning the pastor is a different culture and or race than the majority of the congregation."

Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are a gift to the pastor, congregation and community. However, these appointments can also be challenging without the tools to openly engage in a dialogue of understanding around differences, but more importantly, similarities.

The Cross-Racial Cross-Cultural Training was led by Rev. Giovanni Arroyo and Rev. Dr. Grace Pak of General Commission on Race and Religion (GCORR). Nineteen churches participated in the event along with District Superintendents

and several members of the Intercultural Competency Taskforce, the team leading GNJ's 10-year commitment to growing intercultural competency.

"Racial and cultural understanding takes hard work and intentionality," said Pak. "As a faith community, putting our trust in a God larger than this world, this is a message and initiative that we should all be able to get behind."

The day kicked off with devotion and was followed by breakout sessions covering the topics, 'identifying your own cultural identity' and 'understanding culture.' Participants then broke into small groups to process what they had heard and were given the opportunity to come up with a strategy to share what they learned with their congregations. Participants were also provided with GCORR training resource "Learning from Strangers" which takes a deep dive into the joys and challenges of cross-racial and cross-cultural ministry.

After hosting a successful first training session, the work is only just getting started for these congregations. This training served as an introduction to the topic, while more meaningful follow-up conversations around cross-racial and cross-cultural dynamics have already been planned. Rev. Nicole Caldwell-Gross, Director of Mission and Community Development noted that a pastors gathering will take place on January 31, 2018, and a pastors and congregational gathering is also scheduled for March



On Sept. 23, GNJ hosted the first ever cross-racial, cross-cultural appointment training at the Mission and Resource Center with the goal of strengthening and growing diversity, inclusion, and collaboration in local churches and communities. Photo by Biho Chung



The training, led by Rev. Giovanni Arroyo and Rev. Dr. Grace Park of GCORR provided a time of learning, worship, fellowship and laughter. Photo by Biho Chung



While the training served as an introduction, further meaningful conversations around cross-racial and cross-cultural dynamics are being planned for 2018. Photo by Biho Chung

Rivers of Life Transforming Lives Among Arabic-Speaking Community Pt. 2

Continued from page 5

centuries of our common era. Their long history and deep-seeded cultural tradition makes transition into a Protestant church difficult. Some Coptics in New Jersey would like to keep it that way. A priest from a nearby Coptic Orthodox Church even warned parishioners not to visit Rivers of Life lest they be barred from communion. This warning, however, only stirred curiosity sending Egyptian Coptics out to visit Pastor Gerges in Bayonne.

Even though many were Christian before coming to Rivers of Life, Gerges and his lay leaders developed a well-defined discipleship system to nurture spiritual growth among parishioners. It usually starts with a personal conversation with the pastor or lay leader. Then, the newcomer receives an Arabic language book that explains what it means to follow Jesus. The next step is an invitation to a small group where he or she learns about the foundations of faith. Gerges administers a test after a person completes the class. The test helps determine a person's readiness to join the church and what kind of service they would like to do. They are given an application (like a job application) to help identify the appropriate area of service in the life of the faith community.

"I wasn't expecting many people to complete the applications," said Gerges. "I was surprised when so many were coming back. We had to work hard to

find appropriate places of service for the people."

Gerges and his lay leadership want to be sure that a newcomer to the church finds the right place to fit into the mission of the church. Whether it is leading youth, serving as a technician in the recording studio, forming part of a volunteer in mission team traveling to a place in need, or making hospital visits, the church wants everyone to feel that they are part of the mission.

Gerges has a larger vision to establish a Center for Arabic-speaking People that would reach out to all refugee people in the New Jersey and New York areas. He envisions this center providing much needed services to immigrants and refugees, helping them navigate life in the United States, from obtaining proper documentation, including drivers' licenses, to finding the right kind of cemetery to bury a loved one. Often, immigrants find the US practice of burial starkly different from what they have known. This is especially true of immigrants from the Middle East and Asia. He sees a place that would provide hospitality and care, help immigrants learn how to speak English, and find a place to stay for up to two months while they find their bearings in a new land. He also would help immigrants—regardless of where they come from—to find a place to worship in their own language. Gerges and the "Rivers of Life" congregation could use some

community partners and fundraisers to help them realize their vision.

When asked how the new governmental administration has affected Arabic-speaking immigrants and refugees, Gerges replied, "People are afraid." It is much harder to obtain political asylum and get proper documentation nowadays. Many are forced to find work without documents and are at the mercy of employers who pay wages far below the minimum.

It also makes it hard to run a church. Despite having 200 or more in worship, only 2-3% of the members have the means to support the church with tithes. Many others have family in their country of origin who count on them to send funds to help them put food on the table.

"How can I not support someone who sends much needed funds back home?" asked Gerges. "They are a life-line to so many people... But we still have bills to pay, a heating system to get us through the winter, electricity bills, and contributing to the shared ministry of our denomination. It is a big challenge."

Indeed, the church building that houses Wesley UMC was built in 1848. The parsonage is also very old. Keeping them up and running takes a lot of resources.

"And yet," says Gerges. "We are blessed by our connection in The United Methodist Church. We are blessed to have a building and to have colleagues in ministry who provide a larger family of

people together and building peace with justice. Remember, this work is not just a one-time event, but this is a process of changing the culture of our churches, our families, our communities and our world...May the Lord bless you on this journey toward God's Kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven! Thanks be to God!"

Bishop Schol and current District Superintendent, Rev. Manuel Sardiñas, have urged Gerges to plant satellite campuses of Rivers of Life. He plans to respond to that call as soon as he completes his Masters of Arts in Ministry degree at Drew Theological Seminary at the end of 2017.

The Pastor and lay leaders of the church would welcome any help they could receive so that their ministry could continue to provide hope and life to Arabic speaking immigrants and refugees living in the New York area. Persons interested in supporting this ministry should write to Pastor Gerges at Wesley UMC, 970 Avenue C, Bayonne, NJ 07002-3023.

In the meantime, the ministry of transforming lives in the name of Jesus continues. The Muslim woman who found thirst-quenching help continues to be in contact with Gerges and she has found a job. She found something more through the encounter. She found a lifeline to Jesus and a community of faith willing to hear her story. Rivers of Life are flowing through the streets of Bayonne and the wider New York metropolitan area thanks to the ministry of Wesley UMC, its lay leaders, Pastor Emad Gerges, and his family.

Connecting in Mission: From Tanzania to Greater New Jersey

By Rev. Melissa Hinnen
Melissa.hinnen@nyac-umc.com

RED BANK – Rev. Mutwale Ntambo Wa Mushidi was called to church plant. With his wife Kabaka Ndala Alphonsine and four children, he left his home in the Congo by boat and arrived in Tanzania with nothing but the call to ministry. They didn't know anyone, didn't speak the language, and didn't even have the bare necessities. Now, 25 years later, there are 68 new United Methodist worshipping communities in Tanzania.

"We left our home in DRC (the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and were told by the bishop, 'you go start the UMC in Tanzania.' We left by boat and crossed the deepest lake in Africa," Mushidi told a group who had gathered at Red Bank UMC.

Janie Schildge, a member of the church, helped organize the event while the missionaries were visiting the U.S. It was the third time they visited the church in the past five years. "We are here to refresh our relationship and to thank you," Mushidi told them.

Recalling their first days in Tanzania, Mushidi shared that he went out and met his neighbors, who brought the family food and drinking water. He explained to them that he was there to start a United Methodist Church.

He and Alphonsine started a house church with six Tanzanians the first week. "By the second week, we had twenty congregants. Each week we grew as

refugees, women, and children, including those who have been orphaned, started attending. And then we started new small churches in the surrounding area." In the past 25 years, in partnership with six other missionaries, dozens of churches were started around the country with ordained pastors.

Alphonsine, who said, "I always wanted to help children," taught Sunday school. When she realized that many of the younger children did not have enough money for education, she began a pre-school program that prepares Christian and Muslim children for primary school.

She also teaches women to make handbags and other livelihood projects. They dye batik and sew dresses. "If they don't have machines, we show them how to farm together and sell some of the food," she said.

A new ministry in partnership with the denomination's General Board of Global Ministries is the Tanzania Health Board. After being accepted by the local government, the health board will address public health, teaching women about family planning and how to protect their families from malaria and HIV/AIDS.

With the help of GNJ United Methodist Churches such as Red Bank and Vincent in Nutley, a 15-acre banana plantation was purchased for the conference center. Mushidi and Alphonsine plan to build a new conference center, clinic, and guest house, among other projects. They need to raise \$200,000 for a guesthouse that will be a resource for people visiting the



Rev. Mutwale Ntambo Wa Mushidi and his wife Kabaka Ndala Alphonsine visit the Mission and Resource Center on Sept. 9, sharing their story with GNJ laity.

Photo by Biho Chung

area. The income generated will support the projects. "Please come stay with us," Mushidi invites United Methodists. "You can stay in the guesthouse and volunteer in ministry with local pastors, children, refugees."

Covenant Relationship with GNJ

Rev. David LeDuc, the pastor at Vincent first met Alphonsine and Mushidi in 2012. Because GNJ and the North Katanga Conference are sister conferences, supporting Congolese missionaries serving in Tanzania was a natural connection. "We were inspired by their amazing faith and their dedicated mission work," he said.

Following a mission trip to Tanzania in 2013, LeDuc said, "We dedicated ourselves to helping them raise funds for the Annual Conference Center."

In addition to Vincent and Red Bank, GNJ churches who are supporting United Methodist mission in Tanzania include: West Park UMC, Bridgeton; First UMC of Toms River; Saint Andrew UMC, Toms River; Pitman UMC; Emmanuel UMC, Oaklyn; Little Falls UMC.

Churches and individuals who are interested in supporting these missionaries and their ministries can make a gift through the General Board of Global Missions Advance at www.umcmmission.org/give

Laity Bring Energy, Hopefulness to Leadership Academy

Continued from page 1
caring for."

Harrell and Hunter hope to set up a model program within the Raritan Valley District where they reside, to act as a springboard resource for others in GNJ to do something similar.

"The workshop was really well structured," said Hunter. "People contributed so much and everyone seemed to really benefit from the experience. They left excited to go back to their churches with fresh ideas."

Eric Valosin's track on creating a church website was particularly innovative for those in attendance. The group discussed emerging trends in web design, tips from the United Methodist branding manual, the tools needed to host a website and a hands-on website building tutorial; working together to build a page for a hypothetical church website. Participants sketched out on paper the pages age of the website they wished to build and gave a short presentation of each page, explaining their reasoning behind their decisions for the group to critique.

"Being tied only to the pencil and paper rather than an existing online framework freed the group to come up with some very imaginative designs," said Valosin. "It was fun to see them continue to discuss with each other even after the

workshop had ended, visibly having several small epiphanies and getting more excited about their website-in-progress."

Other tracks included an expressive liturgical and praise dance workshop led by Pamela D. Gordy, and building an effective church social media strategy, facilitated by Debbie Bruce, George Lagos, and Eric Lottes.

"It seems that there's a distinct awareness that by not making social media a priority, the UMC could ultimately lose members and fail to attract new members," said Lagos, GNJ Director of Lay Servant Ministries and President of Rockland Computer Service, LLC. "Social media is the way followers are found and made."

Speakers from Raptor Marketing Group and Blue Vista Solutions educated the group in the many areas of defining church core values, determining target audiences, selecting the right social channels, and creating professionally branded imagery.

"Applying these vital strategies ensures that we engage and grow our church community for the future. How can we not afford to make social media an immediate priority?" said Lagos. "In addition, real budget monies need to be dedicated to this area when setting said budgets."



Lay members gather to learn and network at the 2017 Laity Leadership Academy. Photo by Biho Chung



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Connectional Table Affirms Work of Strategic Planning Team

By Carolyn Conover
cconover@gnjumc.org

After the 2017 Annual Conference in May, the strategic planning committee was given the bold task to pull together a five year strategic plan to take Greater New Jersey into 2023. The strategic planning committee comprised of 12 laity and clergy leaders from across the conference worked this summer to lay the ground work and research to embark on the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan to be presented for consideration at the 2018 Annual Conference session.

The team met in June and July to gather research, results and statistical reports and to lay out plans for surveying lay and clergy throughout Greater New Jersey.

Susan Beaumont, a consultant, pastor and coach who led the 2017 Bishop Clergy Convocation about tending the soul, is facilitating the planning team meetings. With her consultation, the planning team determined to use the appreciative inquiry process to lead planning. Appreciative inquiry is a process that uses the best of what is in order to imagine what could be.

Rev. Hector Burgos, Connectional Ministries Director and Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee said, "Appreciative Inquiry builds on what is working so that we have a direction. We are thankful that Susan Beaumont has led us in this direction."

The team crafted an online survey, emailed it to church leadership and clergy and posted it in The GNJ Digest weekly e-newsletter and on the GNJ website. In addition, the team set up six listening sessions across GNJ. Listening sessions used guided conversations to using appreciative inquiry.

"I was a part of developing the first strategic plan but I thought the listening

sessions this time were more productive," said Rosa Williams, GNJ's Lay Leader. "It gave people the opportunity to focus on what we are doing well and how we can improve and not focus on the problems."

During the process, the planning team heard concern that respondents needed a space to share not just what is working but what is not working. After the first group of sessions, the team added questions for consideration on the GNJ website to address this concern.

After the listening sessions, the planning team read and coded each worksheet. This information was combined with the survey results and presented to the Connectional Table at the GNJ Conclave last month.

Waleska Trinidad, pastor of Primera Iglesia Metodista de Wesley in Trenton and member of Strategic Planning Team said, "We took time to listen to the responses. We are grateful for the honesty in the listening sessions and on the surveys. It gave us a better view of where we need to go."

The Connectional Table affirmed the work to date from the planning team. The planning team is reconvening in October to talk about next steps. The team will take the information presented to prepare a first draft of the plan in November and December. The schedule includes drafting elements of the plan for feedback from the conference in January. The goal is to present the final plan to the Connectional Table in March so that it can be included in the pre-conference journal as legislation for consideration in Annual Conference 2018.

Burgos said, "I give thanks to God for the leadership of the conference and the Connectional Table as we discern what God has next for our ministry in Greater New Jersey."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

— Romans 12:21

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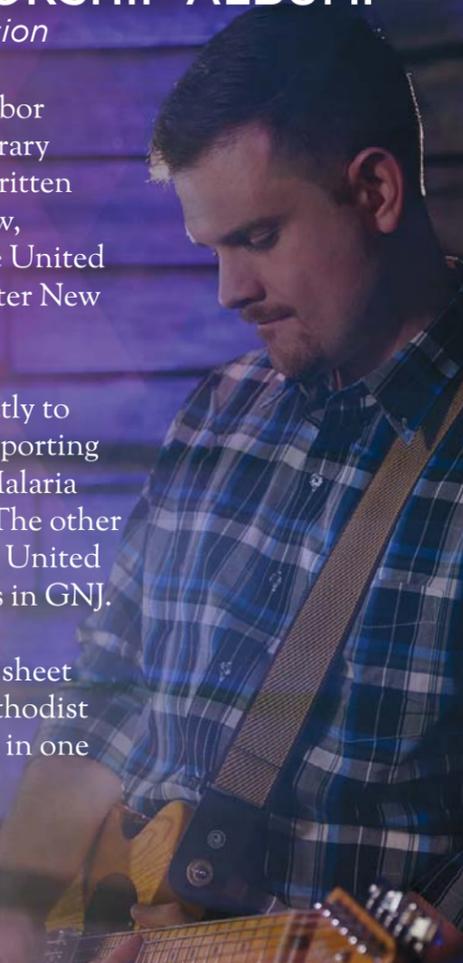
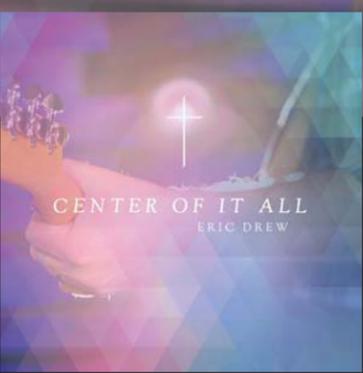
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Hearts Ignited, Memories Forged, Lives Changed

Continued from page 1

International child sponsorship program. Several students raised their hands to receive a packet to sponsor a child, some choking back tears.

During a breakout workshop on Saturday, students packaged more than 80,000 meals for the hungry through the nonprofit Rise Against Hunger; nearly three times the amount packaged at this year's Annual Conference.

"I've heard others tell me that the younger generation is lazy and disconnected," said Rev. Charlie Kinch, pastor of Malaga UMC. "Yet the youth and young people at IGNITE, with the help of 'older' individuals, packaged 80,000 meals! They're not only 'fired up,' but they're 'woke!' (aware)." Kinch continued, "I'm so glad I was able to be a part of this weekend. The youth are our future."

Amy Lynn Charleston was one of the students moving to the beat of the music as she and her friends systematically assembled the meals.

"We were singing and dancing while packing," she exclaimed. "Multi-tasking!"

Leaders were impressed to see their students give up personal time to reach the goal of 80,000 meals.

Leonor Ortega Till, better known as "Jeff the Girl," addressed the youth during a main stage plenary and workshop session. As saxophonist for the popular Christian ska band Five Iron Frenzy, Till shared her stories of touring the country in a band that performed as a witness for Christ. Till testified to God's faithfulness in the midst of the 'dens of life.' Kids clamoring around the edge of the stage gazed up at her in admiration as she emitted a cool, punk rock vibe with a deep love for Jesus.

This year's open mic style coffee house was dubbed the first-ever 'IGNITE's Got Talent' and was moved into a ballroom to accommodate the overwhelming audience and participants. For two hours, students showcased their gifts from singing, dance, rap, comedy, poetry, and musical performances.

"I loved the hugs from people I didn't know and making new friends," said one



Pictured above, youth from seven urban churches from across GNJ: First UMC and John Wesley of Bridgeton, St. Mark's of Montclair, Christ Church of Paterson, St. Matthew of Pennsauken, Spring Valley UMC of N.Y. and Mt. Zion UMC of Lawnside. The youth of these churches meet quarterly through N.J. and N.Y. to fellowship, worship, and learn. Photo by Josh Kinney

mother. "I also really enjoyed spending the weekend with my daughter. Watching her shine, seeing the confident young woman she is growing into."

With shouts of "Amen," songs of praise, prayers for unity and a sense of expectation, dozens of young adults from throughout GNJ took part in the 2017 IGNITE Squad Young Adults Experience, gathering in the mornings for a devotional and time of prayer. As volunteer stagehands, ushers, promoters, ministers, and assistants, the IGNITE Squad has grown over the years into what has become the next step for high school seniors at IGNITE as well as a fresh opportunity for young adults in GNJ to connect, fellowship, learn and serve together.

With stellar performances by DJ Vow and national Christian rap artist Tedashii, the auditorium thumped with vigor, excitement, and the glow of LED light up foam wands.

"My favorite part was being with my best friends for the weekend," said Julia

Yudichak. "It was so amazing! And Reggie's sermon made our whole church cry!"

Sue Jolly Hudler of Toms River commented, "I wish I were a teen again! Would have loved to be able to attend a convention of this magnitude when I was a kid."

For the first time ever, GNJ churches were invited to spend Sunday morning worship at IGNITE, showcasing support and solidarity for the next generation. Congregations who sent students to the conference joined the over 1,300 person crowd inside the Convention Center as well as families of IGNITE youth, churches thinking about sending a group of students in 2018, and those near and far who decided to join in and support GNJ youth in prayer and worship.

"The success of IGNITE is only as successful as our youth ministries,"

Bishop John Schol stated. "I believe the church's future is going to be through our students." He continued, "Worshipping with these young people and witnessing their faith in action is to fully realize that we can overcome this world; that there is victory in Christ."

Christine Dombrowski of Hillsborough said, "I wish our whole church could have shared this experience."

For Kayla Eberly, this year was her third IGNITE conference.

"I left feeling a whole different way than I've ever left an IGNITE before," she said. "I loved all of the hugs and how Meredith sang and really spoke out. She moved me the most. But most of all, I had a lot of tears this weekend about I don't even know; I was so confused why I was crying. I think it's because I've finally found God. I will never forget this IGNITE."



Students packaged over 80,000 meals for the hungry with Rise Against Hunger during an IGNITE workshop.



Reggie Dabbs showed off his saxophone skills and answered questions for the youth with the IGNITE Squad.

Photos by Josh Kinney



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Celebrating Diversity: Love in Every Language

By Laura Buchanan
lbuchanan@umcom.org

METUCHEN - "Globalization has changed our whole world; the world is at our doorsteps. Church is changing and neighborhoods are changing," said the Rev. Anna Thomas of Centenary United Methodist Church in Metuchen, New Jersey. "God loves all of us. How do we share that love in this complex, diverse world?"

The myriad of cultures and languages increasingly interwoven in the fabric of the U.S. present abundant possibilities for local churches. But with those opportunities also come challenges – of the unknown, of different backgrounds and of language barriers.

God calls the church to overcome fear, to care for others and to be a community of hospitality and peace. Your congregation can become a place where people from richly diverse cultures and backgrounds come together as unified believers who all speak a common language of love.

"A multicultural, multiracial church is what the church is in the 21st century," said Rev. Thomas.

Breaking barriers

The congregation at Centennial Multicultural United Methodist Church (CMUMC) in Rockford, Illinois, incorporates people from 16 different countries, from Egypt to Sweden to Mexico. With each person coming from such diverse places around the world, finding unity could be difficult, but the church has risen above their differences of culture and language.

Churches like CMUMC have found that the most effective way of breaking down barriers of fear is to inspire people to develop relationships that encourage empathy, patience and understanding.

"We need to see that we are one. Sometimes churches are divided by language or culture, but when you feel you are one and all part of the same family... anything can happen," said CMUMC's pastor, the Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer. Rev. Thomas, who is from India,

agrees. Her church members represent 13 nationalities. She advises churches to "create an environment that is brave rather than safe, where people can share their stories."

"Unless we talk to each other, we always have a fear of others. To overcome that, you have to really connect with people over food or Bible study," she continued.

When barriers feel too strong to overcome, especially when there is no common language, patience is key.

Rev. Grandon-Mayer said, "Even though sometimes we can't communicate [with someone], we know they are part of the congregation. Language isn't a barrier for us; we can communicate through the language of love. We make an effort to understand and show love and tolerance."

"You have to open your eyes and ears," said Rev. Thomas. "Sometimes it will be difficult, but you have to be patient and able to have that understanding to sit and listen."

The congregation, which includes 13 nationalities, gathers for worship at Centenary UMC in Metuchen, New Jersey.

Uniting in worship

Communication can be a major obstacle when it comes to worshiping as a congregation that speaks different languages, but there are ways to bridge the language gap. Different expressions of worship allow people to relate to, and participate in, the service.

Sometimes a primarily English worship service incorporates different languages through prayers, liturgy or songs. Morgan Stafford, cross-cultural strategist and ministry intern in the Nashville Episcopal Area of The United Methodist Church, suggests incorporating a multilingual worship experience because many young people speak more than one language.

"A bilingual and multicultural service captures the best of both worlds. Everyone can be with their families," he said. "It's less about language and more about hospitality. Relationships can be built without a common language — a lot can



Members of Centenary UMC in Metuchen, New Jersey, celebrate diversity and the love of God through service and community. Photo provided

be said with a smile."

Some churches choose to have two services, each in a different primary language. Rev. Grandon-Mayer is fluent in English and Spanish, so she leads a worship service in each language every week; but these services are simply two expressions of worship rather than two separate congregations. CMUMC is careful to strengthen unity through frequent joint worship services and church-wide gatherings and events.

Building community — inside and out

Churches that focus on celebrating the cultures and languages represented within their membership often have enhanced opportunities to reach out.

Last Thanksgiving, Centenary UMC hosted a dinner for anyone who needed a place to go to celebrate the holiday. More than 45 people came, bringing diverse food, culture, language and faith to a common table.

"When we can connect with each other, we love each other. We have to make room for new conversations to happen

and new relationships to be melded and brought together," said Rev. Thomas.

CMUMC hosts an annual Taste of Centennial event, inviting each congregant to share food, music and customs from their native lands. The community is invited, and attendees have a unique opportunity to travel the world through taste, sound and conversation.

"It shows the community who we are...we are diverse, but we praise one God. We can love each other even though we are all different," said Rev. Grandon-Mayer.

Partnering in ministry

Relationship-centered ministry also extends outside of the congregation. Meaningful, fruitful ministries are born when there is a willingness to connect with people and to embrace a deeper understanding of the cultures, languages, needs and abilities found in the community.

Stafford recommends an assets-based approach when discovering ministry opportunities. "It's so important to get to know your neighbors. Churches should seek to be in relationship first rather than focusing on worship or event planning," he said. "Ask, 'How can we be in ministry with the community rather than for or to?' Once the relationship is there, the engagement follows."

CMUMC has built a strong relationship with the children in their community. For the last 25 years, they have hosted a Saturday Kids' Club that offers food, fellowship and activities. Centenary UMC offers an all-ages Vacation Bible School every summer, where 80 diverse people come together for nightly worship, connection and a family experience.

"So often, the innovative work is simple: partnering with schools, inviting neighbors to church. It doesn't require a lot of money; it takes energy and some sacrifice of time. Many hands make light work," Stafford said.

Leading the way

Church leaders are instrumental in encouraging openness among the congregation and in setting a tone of inclusivity. Pastors and lay leaders who reflect their congregation's diversity can also open doors to people searching for a faith home that encompasses their identity, providing a familiar place to belong and connect.

"Different cultures reflected in leadership bring a different mentality and different ways of reaching out," said Rev. Thomas. "It is hard, but when we create a brave space for [people] to voice fears and give opportunities to reconcile, a lot can be achieved...This is the future. Globalization is not going to stop."

Stafford advised, "Diversity does not happen by accident. Model the change you hope to see within the congregation."

Laura Buchanan is a PR Specialist at United Methodist Communications

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United Methodist #1 Soccer Player is in N.J.



Joel Burgos of Monmouth Regional High School in Tinton Falls. Photo by Scott Faytok for NJ Advance Media

By Josh Kinney
jkinney@gnjumc.org

TINTON FALLS – In the state of New Jersey, the number one scorer in soccer is Joel Burgos, 17, with 24 goals so far this season.

A senior at Monmouth Regional High School in Tinton Falls, Burgos is a lifelong United Methodist, originally from Puerto Rico and member of Oasis UMC in Pleasantville. He currently attends Simpson UMC in Perth Amboy and is captain of his school's Varsity Boys Soccer Team.

"It's a very pleasant surprise and honor to be where I am at right now at this point in the season," said Burgos. "Knowing you're one of the bigger threats out there is a cool feat to have in the back of your mind, but I can't let it get

to my head."

Burgos was voted Player of the Week during the Sept. 18 Shore Conference. He attributes his faith to his focus on the field.

"My faith keeps me calm, focused, and level-headed so I can go out there, perform my best, and do what I have to do to make sure my team has the best possibility to win," he said.

Burgos plans to continue his education studying health science and is interested in physical therapy and sports medicine. He dreams about playing soccer in college in Division 1 and is currently exploring several universities that have shown interest in recruiting him for their soccer teams.

In the meantime, Burgos wants to go on an international mission trip.



GNJ received from Sovereign Insurance, a \$71,000 dividend check on the Worker's Comp Policy from 2015. This occurred because of the positive loss ratio and the continued work of GNJ staff. Pictured above from left to right: Alexa Taylor, Tiffany Lupo, Kevin Gallagher, Bishop John Schol, Rhonda Pozorski, and Alex Mayer. Photo by Josh Kinney

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CHECK OUT OUR FEATURED EPISODE:
Pastor as Community Organizer
Featuring Christian Coon of Urban Village Church

Christian Coon, the co-founding and lead pastor of Urban Village Church, comes on the Uncovered Dish to talk about how he and Trey Hall: dreamed of a church in Chicago that is both gospel-centered and LGBT-inclusive, used community organizing techniques to plant the church, and failed boldly throughout the whole process.



Like, subscribe, download and share your thoughts!

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CONFERENCE HAPPENINGS

Registration Opens for UMW Assembly 2018

The United Methodist Women Assembly 2018 will mark the official celebration of the organization's 150th anniversary, returning to Columbus, Ohio, where the first assembly was held in 1942. Registration for the May 18-20, 2018 event is now open. Visit www.umwassembly.org

2017 Annual Conference Journals Available Online Hard Copies in the Mail

The 2017 Annual Conference Journal is available online in digital form at www.gnjumc.org. Clergy and lay directories are available through Arena. Lay members without Arena credentials can email Kaitlynn Deal at kdeal@gnjumc.org to receive their online copy of the lay directory. Hard copies have been sent to those who ordered in advance.

2017 Bishop's Days on the Region

Gatherings have begun and all clergy and laity of GNJ are welcome. SPRC chairs are highly encouraged to attend.

Northern Region

Including Palisades, Skylands and Gateway North Districts

Clergy Session

October 26 | 9:00 a.m. | Grace UMC in Wyckoff

Laity Session

October 26 | 7:00 p.m. | Grace UMC in Wyckoff

Central Region

Including Raritan Valley, Capital and Northern Shore Districts

Clergy Session

December 7 | 9:00 a.m. | Aldersgate UMC

Laity Session

December 7 | 7:00 p.m. | Aldersgate UMC

Open Enrollment Starts Nov. 1

HealthFlex Annual Election (Active Plan) United Healthcare Annual Election (Retiree Plan) and Guardian Dental Open Enrollment begins Nov. 1 – 16. Elections made during this time will take effect Jan. 1, 2018. For more information, contact the GNJ Benefits Specialist at insurance@gnjumc.org

Let the Mission and Resource Center Serve You

Visit www.gnjumc.org/meeting to fill out the Conference Meeting Room request form and reserve space for your congregation, agency, or committee.

Peace on the Korean Peninsula Forum

The General Board of Church and Society invites you to attend the Peace on the Korean Peninsula Forum in Washington, D.C., to learn about the unrest and tension on the Korean Peninsula and what people of faith can do. Visit www.umcjustic.org to learn more and register by Oct. 27.

Laity Sunday: "Therefore, Go! With Hope Through Hospitality"

On Laity Sunday, Oct. 15, United Methodists celebrate the calling, laity as well as clergy, to go and make disciples. We are called to be the church together in a world so desperately in need of hope. Resources for this Sunday can be found at www.umcdiscipleship.org

UMVIM Awareness Sunday

The United Methodist Board of Global Ministries is inviting United Methodist churches and annual conferences to participate in United Methodist Volunteers in Mission Awareness Sunday on a date of their choosing. Visit www.umcmmission.org volunteer to learn more.



An energizing event for young clergy ages 25-39

Wespath is hosting a revitup! for a Lifetime in Ministry educational event for young clergy ages 25-39 and under Nov. 13-15 in Pensacola Beach, FL. The event serves to strengthen personal, financial and leadership skills to sustain a lifetime in ministry. Scholarship opportunities and childcare are available. Visit www.wespath.org/events/revitup for details and to register.



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INTERPRETATION EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE

GNJ has interpretation equipment available for agencies, committees and other groups so your next event or service can be interpreted in up to four languages.

www.gnjumc.org/translation-equipment-request-form



Calvary UMC in Kearny Celebrates Success of Back Pack Ministry

Celebrating over 15 years in ministry, Calvary UMC's "Back Pack" and "Outside of Church Sunday School" ministries which started with 20 bags filled with school supplies which has multiplied to presently over 130 bags this year, with donations from several neighboring churches. The bags were distributed to Newark Episcopal House, Grace UMC in Kearny, North Arlington school system and Crescent Lanes in Irvington as well as extra supplies donated to hurricane victims.

OBITUARIES

E.T. Holland, Retired Full Elder, died on Sept. 5. A celebration of Life took place on Oct. 7 at First UMC in Newton, NJ.

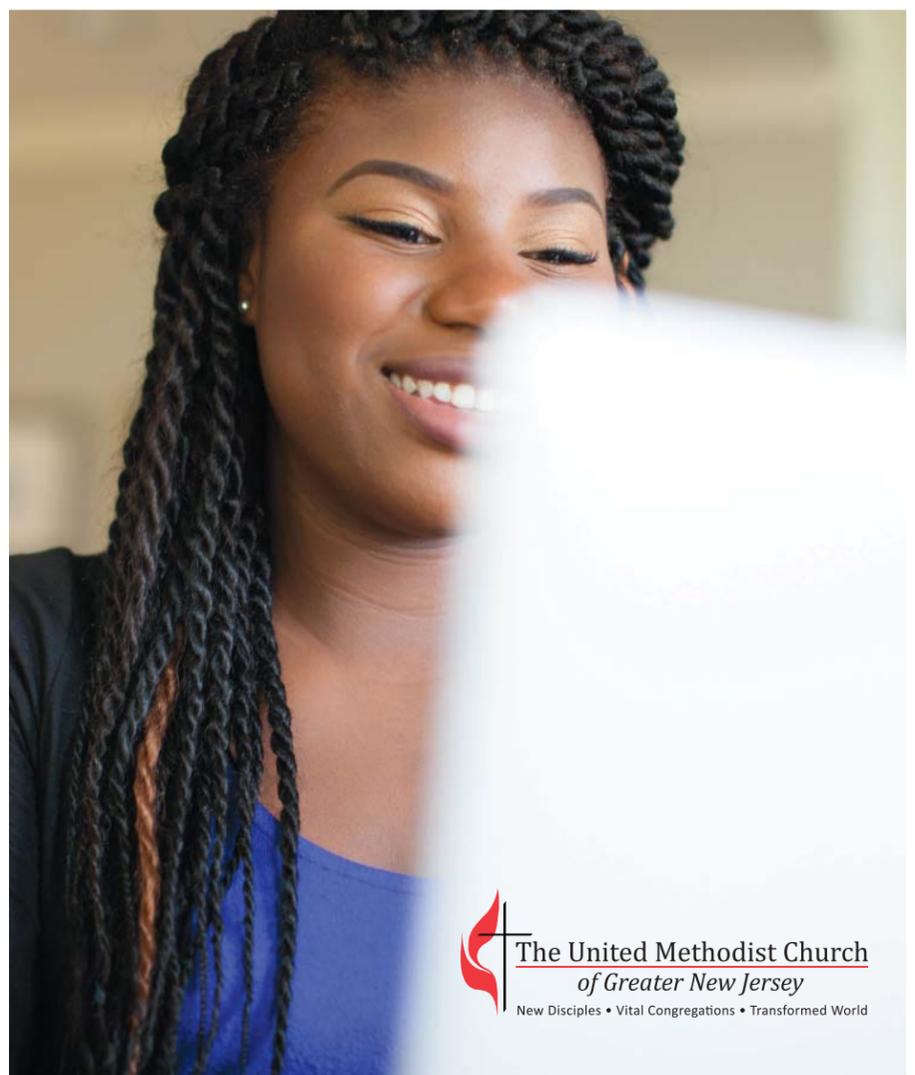
Memorial donations (in lieu of flowers) may be sent to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) at www.umcor.org or by mailing a check to The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey Mission and Resource Center, 205 Jumping Brook Rd., Neptune, NJ 07753, attn.: In memory of E.T. Holland.

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Dr. E. Thomas Holland & Rev. Clarissa South-Holland, 1501 Cabot Ave., Whiting, NJ 08759

NEED INSPIRATION?

Read "The Connection" blog at:
gnjumc.org/connection

Plug in and connect with the 5 markers of vitality and hear from the GNJ Connectional Ministries Team.



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A DAY OF PRAYER

The 5th Anniversary of Superstorm Sandy

Sunday, October 29, 2017

On the 5th Anniversary of Superstorm Sandy, United Methodists of Greater New Jersey we remember the estimated 2,500 homeowners that are still on the path to recovery in New Jersey. **Resources for your congregation to join the Day of Prayer on Sunday, October 29 are available at www.afuturewithhope.org.**

You can download videos, litany, prayers, information on homeowners and a list of every volunteer group that has joined the rebuilding effort. Many of these volunteers are now preparing to deploy to help survivors of hurricanes Irma, Harvey and Maria.

Join us in prayer for the renewal of those on the path to recovery, for those struggling to find the resources to rebuild and for those who hear their call.

Volunteer. Pray. Donate.

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